Covid News: Texas Governor Issues Executive Order Barring Vaccine Mandates

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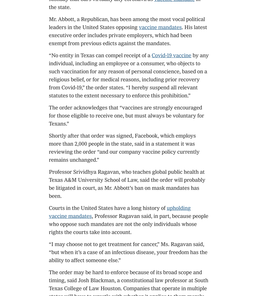
The order bars private companies from requiring employees to be vaccinated. A W.H.O. panel recommends an additional vaccine dose for the immunocompromised.

Follow our live coverage of the coronavirus pandemic, vaccines and booster shots.

Here's what you need to know:

- The governor of Texas bars Covid vaccine mandates.
- A W.H.O. panel recommends additional vaccine doses for immunocompromised people.
- Players on N.H.L.'s newest team are sidelined by Covid protocols before debut.
- Boosters are most likely on the way for recipients of the Moderna and J. & J. vaccines.
- Merck applies for emergency authorization for what would be the first pill to treat Covid.
- One in five of England's most critically ill Covid patients are unvaccinated pregnant women, a study finds.
- After postponements and a cancellation, the Boston Marathon is back.
- Boosters can bolster resistance among the vaccine hesitant, surveys and interviews show.

The governor of Texas bars Covid vaccine mandates.



Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas at the Texas Oklahoma football game in Dallas on Saturday. On Monday he issued an executive order that bars almost any vaccine mandate in the state. Jeffrey McWhorter/Associated Press

Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas issued a broad executive order on Monday that bars virtually any coronavirus vaccine mandate in the state.

Mr. Abbott, a Republican, has been among the most vocal political leaders in the United States opposing vaccine mandates. His latest executive order includes private employers, which had been exempt from previous edicts against the mandates.

"No entity in Texas can compel receipt of a Covid-19 vaccine by any individual, including an employee or a consumer, who objects to such vaccination for any reason of personal conscience, based on a religious belief, or for medical reasons, including prior recovery from Covid-19," the order states. "I hereby suspend all relevant statutes to the extent necessary to enforce this prohibition."

The order acknowledges that "vaccines are strongly encouraged for those eligible to receive one, but must always be voluntary for Texans."

Shortly after that order was signed, Facebook, which employs more than 2,000 people in the state, said in a statement it was reviewing the order "and our company vaccine policy currently remains unchanged."

Professor Srividhya Ragavan, who teaches global public health at Texas A&M University School of Law, said the order will probably be litigated in court, as Mr. Abbott's ban on mask mandates has been.

Courts in the United States have a long history of upholding vaccine mandates, Professor Ragavan said, in part, because people who oppose such mandates are not the only individuals whose rights the courts take into account.

"I may choose not to get treatment for cancer," Ms. Ragavan said, "but when it's a case of an infectious disease, your freedom has the ability to affect someone else."

The order may be hard to enforce because of its broad scope and timing, said Josh Blackman, a constitutional law professor at South Texas College of Law Houston. Companies that operate in multiple states will have to wrestle with whether it applies to them merely by having some operations in Texas, he said.

Some businesses may face "severe financial risk" if they already have mandates in place, said Mr. Blackman.

The order ratchets up an already deeply polarizing debate. On one side is President Biden, who has mandated shots for health care workers, federal contractors and the vast majority of federal workers, and has ordered all private employers with 100 workers or more to require their workers to be vaccinated or undergo frequent testing.

Mr. Biden's actions reflected growing frustration with the millions of Americans who are eligible for shots but have not gotten them. In announcing them, he spoke of the need to "protect vaccinated workers from the unvaccinated."

As of Friday, 66 percent of people 12 and older in the United States have been fully vaccinated, according to a New York Times database — a lower figure than dozens of other countries have achieved.

Texas Coronavirus Cases

About the data

On the other side are the Republican governors of Texas, Florida and other states who now adamantly oppose any measures that would require vaccines or masks, saying they infringe on personal liberties. Their bans on mandates have been making their way through the courts for months.

A Texas hospital, Houston Methodist, was one of the first large health care facilities in the country to enforce a vaccine mandate in June, when more than 150 staff members were fired or resigned.

Facebook and Google, which maintain significant campuses in Texas, had said before Monday's order that they would require proof of vaccination for employees to return to their offices.

American Airlines, based in Fort Worth, announced on Friday that more than 100,000 U.S.-based employees must get vaccinated.

Z. David Gutshaw contributed reporting.

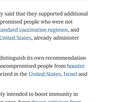
— Ethan Hauser and Azi Paybarah

Tracking the Coronavirus

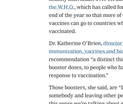
	United States Aug. on Oct. 15	14-day change	World Aug. on Oct. 15	14-day change
New cases	84,245	↓ 21%	390,305	↓ 14%
New deaths	1,587	↓ 16%	6,433	↓ 17%

U.S. hot spots

Vaccinations



Global hot spots



Global vaccinations

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A W.H.O. panel recommends additional vaccine doses for immunocompromised people.

A vaccination site in Spain, where the health regulator approved the use of third Covid-19 vaccination shots for immunocompromised people in September. Emilio Tenreiro/Getty Images

Severely or moderately immunocompromised people who have been vaccinated should be offered an additional dose of the seven coronavirus vaccines the World Health Organization has authorized, an advisory committee recommended on Monday.

People whose immune systems are diminished should get another shot if they initially received vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, the Serum Institute of India, Johnson & Johnson, Sinopharm and Sinovac, members of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization told reporters on a call on Monday.

Dr. Alejandro Cravioto, the committee's chair, said that people with compromised immune systems "need a third dose as an additional priming process so that they're fully protected."

The officials also recommended a third vaccine dose for people 60 and over who were inoculated with China's Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, ideally of the same brand as their first course of treatment.

Tracking Coronavirus Vaccinations Around the World

More than 3.76 billion people worldwide have received a Covid-19 vaccine, equal to about 48.1 percent of the world population.

W.H.O. officials have previously said that they supported additional vaccine doses for immunocompromised people who were not sufficiently protected from a standard vaccination regimen, and some countries, including the United States, already administer them.

The committee was careful to distinguish its own recommendation for additional doses for immunocompromised people from booster shot regimens like those authorized in the United States, Israel and some European countries.

Those booster programs, largely intended to boost immunity in healthy individuals over certain ages, have drawn criticism from the W.H.O., which has called for a moratorium on boosters until the end of the year so that more of the world's limited supply of vaccines can go to countries where few people have been vaccinated.

Dr. Katherine O'Brien, director of the W.H.O.'s department of immunization, vaccines and biologicals, called the panel's recommendation "a distinct thing from giving additional doses, booster doses, to people who have had an adequate primary response to vaccination."

Those boosters, she said, are "like putting two life jackets on somebody and leaving other people without any life jacket. So in this sense we're talking about getting the first life jacket on to people who have immunocompromising conditions."

She added that the W.H.O. had not yet determined that fully vaccinated, otherwise healthy people needed the added protection from boosters, but the committee planned to review booster issues during a session on Nov. 11.

The call with reporters on Monday was intended to summarize a series of meetings held last week, during which officials discussed global vaccine issues, like a newly approved vaccine for malaria.

— Daniel E. Slotnik

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